

**STUDENT EXTERN GUIDELINES**  
**JAMES H. QUILLEN VAMC EYE CLINIC**  
**MOUNTAIN HOME, TN**

Welcome to the James H. Quillen VA Medical Center! We hope that your student extern rotation with our clinic will be both enjoyable and productive. To that end, the information packet included with this letter is intended to answer some of the most frequently asked questions by students coming to this facility. It was developed based on input from previous students, and hopefully contains some useful information that will ease your transition to the clinic and provide written guidelines for policy and procedure at this facility.

This information is not a comprehensive policy manual, but is merely an introduction to the James H. Quillen VAMC Eye Clinic. Please review the material prior to your arrival. Feel free to contact us at any point should there be questions concerning its content or other questions that may arise.

We look forward to working with you.

**1. What should I bring to clinic?**

The only item you are required to bring is your clinic jacket. A photographic ID tag will be provided after your arrival, and must be worn at all times while on duty. All other clinic equipment is provided and available in the exam lanes. If you prefer to use your own clinical diagnostic equipment (direct or indirect ophthalmoscopes, for example), then you are welcome to use them as desired. Other diagnostic or therapeutic items, such as for corneal foreign body removal, must be sterilized or disposed of according to VA protocol, and you should therefore expect to use equipment provided by the VA for these purposes.

**2. When should I expect to be in clinic?**

Clinic hours are from 8:00 AM until 4:30 PM Monday through Friday. Evenings and weekends are free, and you will not be on call. Government holidays, such as July 4, Veterans Day, and Memorial Day, will be observed, and you should feel free to check the calendar upon your arrival for those holidays. Other time off for emergencies, sick leave, or Christmas will be in accordance with guidelines for your academic institution, and should be arranged as needed with the externship supervisor (Dr. Bennett).

**3. What type of a clinical experience should I expect?**

Our patient population is predominantly male, with an average age around 60. As such, we deal primarily with ocular and systemic conditions found in the aging population. This is a disease-oriented, hospital-based setting. Glaucoma, macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, and cardiovascular and cerebrovascular complications will be common. Our students typically see around 500 patients per quarter in clinic. As opportunities permit, you may assist with special procedures such as fluorescein angiography or minor lid lesion removal, or also observe other hospital clinics from carotid duplex to CT scanning or laboratory/pathology services. You may also observe various surgeries at our facility as desired (cataract, corneal,

oculoplastics, some retinal), or sit in on refractive surgery at a TLC center in town. Our students come to us with a wide variety of experiences, and you may already have had the chance to do some of these things. We will try to adjust these specialty rotations to the needs of the individual student, based on your previous experiences.

**4. How will I be graded?**

Grades will be assigned based on input from both preceptors (Drs. Bennett and Bohlman) using the forms specific to your school. If you are not familiar with these forms or the grading criteria, ask for a copy. We will try to have an informal midterm evaluation with each student, but sometimes the clinic schedules do get busy and this gets overlooked. If you have questions at any time concerning your performance, please don't hesitate to ask. There should be no surprises in the final grade, but ultimately it will be up to you to make sure you are comfortable with the feedback you are getting from the instructors.

There may be other assignments required by your school, such as patient logs or case reports, that are part of your final grade. It is your responsibility to make sure you are aware of these requirements and complete them accordingly.

**5. What about living quarters and meals?**

Limited student housing is available on the VA campus on a first-come, first-served basis. Meals are also included, and are served at the Domiciliary cafeteria. The quarters are dormitory style living, and there is no charge for either the housing or the meals. PLEASE NOTE: If you would like to request student housing, let Dr. Bennett know as soon as possible. We cannot guarantee housing, so the further ahead we make a reservation, the better the chances of getting it. You may choose, however, to find housing on your own. The VA is located adjacent to East Tennessee State University, so there is plenty of student-oriented housing available in the area.

Lunches are provided to all students during duty hours (Monday – Friday), regardless of housing situation. The VA does need to process certain paperwork for all our students because of this, so please contact Dr. Bennett 4-6 weeks prior to arrival so the necessary forms can be sent to you.

**6. Why are the medical records so important?**

The patient's medical records for all clinics, from optometry to cardiology, are all maintained in one or more volumes or in a computerized record, including both inpatient and outpatient visits. Any provider from across the hospital has access to what you wrote on your exam form. A provider in Internal Medicine seeing your patient for diabetes may be looking at your assessment to see when the patient was last checked for diabetic retinopathy and what the results were. Your assessment and plan must be legible and clear enough so that other people can understand what was done and why. In addition, multiple providers in the Eye Clinic may see the same patient over a period of time, and must be able to go back through the records and follow the thought process of previous exams.

We are now in the process of converting to electronic medical records. Some clinics are computerized and others are still using the standard medical record. Optometry does use electronic patient records, so you will be typing most patient data into the

computer. Because other clinics are still converting, though, there will be occasions when you will write in the old patient records. We will show you how to manage the medical records as you start seeing the patients.

**7. Where is the clinic located?**

The James H. Quillen VA Medical Center is located in Johnson City, TN, adjacent to East Tennessee State University and the Johnson City Medical Center. From I-181, exit at State of Franklin Road going west. Continue on State of Franklin Road, crossing West Market Street at the 4<sup>th</sup> traffic light. Pass the Johnson City Medical Center on the left, continuing on State of Franklin Road. At the 4<sup>th</sup> traffic light past West Market street, turn left (First Tennessee Bank and Texaco are on the corner). Immediately after crossing over the railroad tracks, bear to the right past the pond. This road intersects with Dogwood Avenue directly in front of Building 8, where the Eye Clinic is located on the second floor. Parking is available on the street in front of the building, or in the parking lot directly behind the building.

